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ADDRESS

TO THE

GRADUATING CLASS

AT THE

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA,

At Commencement, June 2d, 1881.

BY GENERAL E. J. MALLETT,
OF NEW YORK,
OF THE CLASS OF 1818.

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1881.

EXORDIUM.

MR. PRESIDENT AND LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

“ You’d scarce expect one of *my* age,
To speak in public on the stage.”

And I am quite sure you are not more surprised to see me than I am to find myself here. Little did I dream, when I said farewell to “ *Alma Mater* ” just three score and three years ago, that I would reappear at this time and in *this place*.

The Rt. Rev. Bishop Green, of Mississippi, the Reverend Doctor Morrison, of Charlotte, and myself, are the *battered remains* of the class of 1818. I had fondly cherished the hope of meeting them here, and though I am disappointed in that hope, yet I am glad to be here myself—but sadness is mingled with gladness—for of the many who bade me farewell, there is not one alive to welcome my return; they all have answered the last roll call, and have gone “to that undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns,” and where soon I will join them.

It is marvellous how the surroundings *here* awaken memories that have slumbered for more than half a century. Image after image comes boldly to the front—the dead reappear—and scenes of the long ago are re-enacted with a fidelity that startles me with wonderment.

This morning I made a pilgrimage to the tomb of the venerable Joseph Caldwell, which so conspicuously decorates the campus. No one who knew him can ever forget him. A man of a blameless and useful life; gigantic in intellect and a prince of learning. And this institution never would have had birth and attained its present maturity but for his assiduous efforts before the State Legislature. He was childless, and *adopted* “Chapel Hill,” and he watched

over it with parental devotion and fondness to the last hour of his life.

There was Professor Wm. Hooper—tall and erect, polished in manners, gentle in disposition, and a ripe scholar. He was rigid and exacting in scholastic discipline, but tender and gentle in enforcing his requirements.

There was Professor Mitchell—a guiding star to his followers, a devotee to his work, an ornament to the State, and a premature martyr to science.

Those who knew these men slightly, admired and respected them, those who knew them well, admired, respected and honored them, and those who knew them *intimately*, admired, respected, honored and loved them. Not only eminent as scientists, but models in domestic life, and patterns in the social circle. There are numerous examples, (both living and dead) where brilliant talents and exalted eminence have not walked hand in hand with modest merit and truthful integrity. Not so with these men, for they lived and died without spot or blemish; and any college, State or nation might pridefully boast of such a *trio*. I do not speak from hearsay, for I knew them face to face, and I can see them now, unchanged as when we parted. And thus, the magic wand of memory gives beauty to ashes, and life to the dead.

I now address the graduating class.

When you leave this place, you will start on the journey of life, and you will not find the road straight and level as a turnpike. There are crooked places, some hills and valleys, and very many precipices. Every one must choose his own path, aided by such directions as God has given him; and there are so many wrong paths crossing the right one, and the wrong ones well beaten, while the right ones are often so faint you can scarcely see them; and there are so many always going the wrong way, that between the number of paths to puzzle, and the number of examples to mislead you, if you do not take continual heed, you will be

in great danger of turning into the wrong path, which leads to irretrievable ruin ; and you will do this, and scarce perceive your error, until too late to retrace your steps.

There are no *fragments* so precious as those of time. We cannot make an hour, or even a moment, but we can waste months and years. Therefore, my young friends, garner up your time and avoid *idleness*.

The most miserable and useless position a man can be placed in, is when he has nothing to do. An idle man is a *sponge* on his fellow man, and a blight on society ; for, besides setting a bad example, he absorbs the industrial hours of others. Every man who is idle, or gets his living without work, is adding so much to the misery of the world, and is really injuring the morals and happiness of the human family, and he should be held responsible for it.

What would be our condition if we were all idle ? Who would sow and who would reap ? Who would build our houses, make our clothes, print our books, or navigate our ships ? Without *some* pursuit, no man (in my opinion) can be really happy, or even hold a reputable position in society ; and it is well said, that the humble wood sawyer is a better member of society than the idle fop without brains or occupation. Every one should be employed in endeavoring to enlarge the dominion of thought, or to simplify the means of subsistence, or to do something *in some way* to benefit his fellow men.

AS A RULE, TO BE IDLE IS TO BE VICIOUS.

There are now living hundreds, yea thousands, who are physically, mentally, morally and financially bankrupt, and who can trace their first step of error to an idle hour.

“ Will you walk into my parlour,
Said the spider to the fly ;
’Tis the prettiest little parlour
That ever you did spy ;

You've only got to put your foot
 Just inside of the door,
 And you'll see so many pretty things,
 You never saw before."

Yes, in sauntering away an idle hour, he was attracted by the click of billiard balls, and allured by dazzling lights, and was tempted to put his foot "just inside of the door." And soon bewildered with music and dancing girls, and fascinated with sparkling glasses,

He's madly enticed—just to sip and to taste,
 And make all his future—a barren waste.

Do not misconceive me, and infer that I ignore recreation, amusements, and even fun and frolic, for these are natural outlets to the emotions of the young, and are as essential to the health of the mind as sleep is to the body. I mean *habitual idleness*, and, to use a vulgarism, a *loafer*.

I am an advocate for healthful and harmless amusement, and plenty of it, lest we *overwork*. And I would advise you, as a sanitary precaution, never to employ more than four *consecutive* hours at one sitting on any one subject. More than that fatigues the body and perplexes the mind. It is not what we eat that gives physical vitality, but what we *digest*. And it is not the number of volumes we read that gives us knowledge, but it is what we *remember*. If we overcrowd the stomach, dyspepsia will supervene; and if we overtax the brain, lassitude and sometimes lunacy will ensue. So, caution is needful, as well to guard against excessive work as excessive idleness.

A man's religious belief exerts a powerful influence over all his thoughts and acts. I quote from Addison :

"It must be so, Plato : thou reasonest well, else
 Why this pleasing thought, this strong desire,
 This longing after *immortality* ?"

And what says Saint Paul : "This mortal must put on immortality." I know not your views, my young friends,

on this subject. If you do not believe in immortality, then this world is a blank, and life is not worth living for. And if you do believe in it, then live for it, and die for it, and believe this world is only a veil obscuring a more glorious world behind it. A world beautiful beyond description, and excellent beyond thought or expression.

As age creeps on, you will find life to be a series of dissolving views. Shakespeare thus quaintly illustrates it :

“ ’Tis now just ten o’clock—an hour ago it was nine—and in an hour Hence ’twill be eleven ; and so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe, And then from hour to hour we rot and rot, and thereby hangs a tale.”

Yes, and a very long one, for it is endless.

You are now the sons of the State. ’Tis but a little while since your fathers were where you now are, and in another little while you will be the fathers, and your sons will occupy your place. And thus the scenes continually change. Then much devolves upon you in this generation and the next. Oh ! my young friends, tear a leaf from the book of history and wear it next your hearts as a constant *reminder*, that the seeds of error and dissipation sown in the spring time of life, will yield a prolific crop of sorrow in the autumn harvest. For the devotee to licentiousness receives no requital but remorse ; and finds no repose but the grave. “ Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap.”

As the scroll of time unrolls, you will discover that humanity is not the flower of a day or of a season. It requires a lifetime for its development, and a long tale of years for its bloom, its fruitage and its death. Sometimes the harvests are sudden, and sometimes (as in my case) they linger, but though we may sleep for ages in the dust before resurrection, yet sooner or later there will be an eternal uprising, when the bloom will know no harvest, when it will be perennial spring, when brighter stars will glitter on the mantle of night, and a more effulgent sun will sparkle on the dew drops of morning. You are now about to embark on the

voyage of life, and you are fully equipped with all needful appliances.

Now let me suggest four cardinal points, and believe me, if you adhere to them, you will float over the ocean of time with never a ripple or a wave. *Be sober—be honest—always speak the truth—and fear nothing but God.*

A man who is sincere and thoughtful, has the easiest time in the world. He needs no prompter for words, nor guide for his acts, because, truth being always consistent with itself, he is not perplexed about his words or his actions. It is like a traveller on a plain and level road, which is sure to bring him safely to his journey's end, when by taking *cross cuts and by-ways*, he might lose himself. You all now have prospective plans, schemes and enterprises which may employ months, perhaps years, to accomplish them; and you have every reasonable hope of living to consummate them. Not so with me; my work is finished; I have no plans or prospective enterprises; and if I had, I am not like you, who can look forward to years. I am limited to days and hours; I have climbed the hill of time, and long ago passed the summit level, and am so far down the other side that I can see the valley where life's journey ends. And that will be the *end of earth*, but not the end of life. For this mortal must put on immortality, and I will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and transformed and transferred to another life and another world. And to what can we liken that other world, and that other life? Ah! my young friends, volumes have been written on that speculative subject, and for ages and ages that question has been asked, and it is yet unanswered. It is a question every one must answer for himself. My answer is,

IN TE DOMINE SPERAVI.

For God is God of the night as well as the day,
And I feel and know
That I can go
Wherever HE leads the way.

Now, farewell; and I devoutly add—*Deus vobis cum.*

